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Perception predominates

Service News; Yarmouth; Nov 1998; Char Labounty;

Abstract:

A commentary discusses how in the game of customer service, perception rules - it is the basis for establishing credibility for the entire IT organization.

Full Text:

We read many articles on the importance of customer perception, but do we understand what that really means? In the game of customer service, perception rules-it's the basis for establishing credibility for your entire IT organization.

Regardless of what your empirical data tells you, it's paramount that your service measurement practices are a healthy combination of qualitative and quantitative data. It's easy to believe your organization is doing a great job if you don't have processes in place to see how customers really perceive you.

It's no secret that your service should be closely tied to your company's vision. Take a look at the overall mission statement. Why are you in business? Then review your departmental mission. What is your IT organization doing to enable the company's vision? Next, examine your company's business initiatives. What activities are currently important to your company? In the context of these initiatives, review the service-level goals and criteria of your IT organization. Do they meet the needs of your customers?

Once you've completed this exercise, you can take several approaches to determine true customer satisfaction. One of my favorites is customer satisfaction surveys. Many of you are doing them and I applaud your efforts, but remember a couple of key criteria. Sat surveys should be designed so customers can respond easily. For example, email should be an option for responding. Second, the surveys should reflect the actual service event, so they should be personalized with the event number and a brief description. Third, they should be sent out within 72 hours of the event. Finally, the surveys should be constructed so they obtain information on the effectiveness, efficiency, professionalism, technical proficiency, and knowledge of the IT service personnel.

If you capture this information in a database, you'll be amazed at the trends you can uncover. You'll be able to identify the impact of well-planned new system introductions, as well as that of poorly planned introductions. If you are short staffed, you should see a direct correlation to customer satisfaction, and can plan accordingly for the next time you lose staff member.

Customer callbacks are another way to determine customer perception. You won't have time to call back on every service event, so I suggest you have your agents call back on those service events that were escalated to level 2 or level 3 to ensure the events were satisfactorily concluded. This goes far to developing a strong

ownership philosophy in your support center and your customers will appreciate the follow-up.

Service observation or callmonitoring programs also provide a significant amount of information on customer perception because you can determine how consistent your service is. A good service observation program goes far to improving service perceptions by providing timely feedback to your customer service staff, as well as helping to identify ways to focus on continuous improvement opportunities. However, you should take care when implementing such programs, as there may be legal issues.

Finally, monitoring the number of service events you have to reopen can provide a clear picture of how well you are servicing your customers. Reopening service events indicates that the IT organization did not provide complete service the first time and the disruption these can cause can cost your organization real money. SN

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NetReflector

InstantSurvey

InstantSurvey Gets Info from Customers, Fast

Dateline: 12/21/1998

It's always a good idea to find out what your customers think of your business. One way to find out their thoughts is to ask them. That is often a hard chore, and usually an expensive one for small business. InstantSurvey by NetReflector is an attempt to change that using the Internet.

InstantSurvey is an easy to use online tool to help small businesses gather the information they need from their customers. You don't need any special technical expertise to run it because there are simple step-by-step directions and wizards to guide you through the whole

> For more on creating more traditional customer surveys take a look at Business Tip 46: Keep In Touch with Your Customers and Tip 38: Take a Customer Survey.

process. If you want to spend the time to add creativity to your questionnaire form, InstantSurvey lets you do that as well. There are also tutorials to help you through the survey creation process, and help is always nearby. When your survey is up and running, you receive the responses in a detailed report which presents the data in graphical form for easy analysis, as well as the responses themselves.

You can ask open-ended, yes or no, or multiple choice questions as needed. You have a couple of ways to get your survey in front of your customers. It can be on a Web page, and while the survey page will actually be located at InstantSurvey's Website, no one need know that. You just link to it like any other page on your site. If you have a list of customer e-mail addresses, InstantSurvey will e-mail them an invitation to take your survey with a link to the Webpage holding the survey, or you can e-mail themselves. If you are wondering about the security of the information you are collecting, don't worry. You are protected by SSL encryption, individual account passwords, and firewalls.

Pricing

Pricing for surveys is based upon the number of responses they collect. Prices for a single survey vary between $2-$4 (US) per response. Discounted license pricing is available for clients seeking to pre-purchase. 5000 or more responses for collection over a 12 month period using various surveys. NetReflector has a cost estimator to help you get a ballpark idea.

> Instant Survey Reviews:
> Inc Magazine Article
> Entrepreneur Magazine

Free Trial

If you want to find out if this is something you can use, take advantage of NetReflector's free trial offer which lets you conduct a survey with 25 respondents at no cost. Give it a try. It's easy.
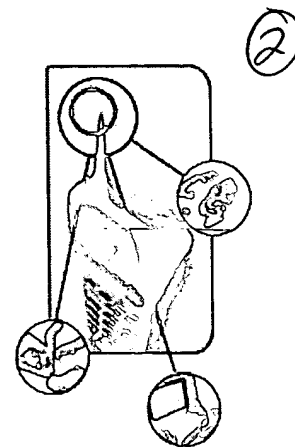
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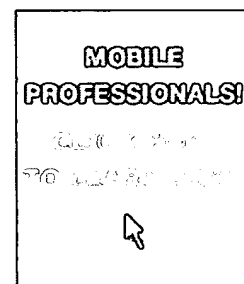*http://sbinformation.about.com/library/weekly/aa122198.htm*
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